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Reagan says foes of contra aid are inviting 'strategic disaster'

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WASHINGTON - President Reagan, declaring that "simple humanitarian aid is not enough" for rebel forces fighting the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, charged yesterday that opponents of US military support are inviting a "strategic disaster by abandoning yet another fighting ally of this country in the field."

In a White House meeting with private sponsors of his Nicaragua policy, Reagan said that "those who invite this strategic disaster will be held fully accountable."

The Administration has asked Congress for \$70 million in military assistance to the contras, as the rebels are called, and \$30 million in nonlethal assistance, even though millions of dollars worth of nonlethal aid voted last year has not been distributed because of diplomatic and logistic difficulties with Nicaragua's neighbors, notably Honduras.

Congress has been wary of military support for the contras, who have not achieved significant success against an overwhelming Sandinista army. Many congressmen are calling for a resumption of peace negotiations between the United States and Nicaragua, but the administration has insisted on a cease-fire and talks between the Sandinistas and the contras as a precondition for peace talks.

Reagan called Nicaragua "a launching pad for revolution," and painted a picture of toppling democracies in Central America if the Sandinistas defeat the contras.

"I think it (defeat of the contras) would place in jeopardy the survival of each of those small and fragile democracies now in Central American," Reagan said, "open up the possibility of Soviet military bases on American's doorstep, threaten the security of the Panama Canal, inaugurate a vast migration northward to the United States of hundreds of thousands of refugees."

The president's remarks represented a fresh assault on his congressional opponents, who for 16 months have frustrated administration efforts to win military assistance for the contras.

The White House meeting also spearheaded a multimillion-dollar media blitz by a private conservative group to strengthen popular support for administration policy.

Raising specter of refugees

Paid television advertisements associating the Sandinistas with Libyan leader Moammar Khadafy and raising the specter of "hundreds of thousands" of Nicaraguan refugees who "cannot go home again" began appearing yesterday in 26 major markets from Hartford to Corpus Christi under the sponsorship of the National Endowment for the Preservation of Liberty.

The 30-second spots, financed by private donations to the organization, have been focused on Southern audiences, who are most

likely to support the administration's position, according to the Carl Russell Channell, National Endowment president and former finance chairman for the National Conservative Political Action Committee.

Channell said two of the three ads already prepared have been accepted by major network affiliates in Connecticut, Florida, Tennessee, the Carolinas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Georgia and Oklahoma. The campaign began last week on television here.

An ad linking the Sandinistas to Nazis in World War II, and entitled "Genocide in Nicaragua," has been rejected by broadcasters, said Channell, who attended yesterday's White House meeting.

Administration officials have vilified as "disinformation" the Sandinistas' media campaign by the New York firm Agendas International Inc.

Attorney Paul Reichler, representing the Nicaraguan government here, said the administration's attack on the Sandinistas' public relations plan was "designed to intimidate the press" and to "chill respectable journalists."

But Donald Casey, a partner in Agendas International, said the public relations effort is continuing, pointing to the US visit of Nicaraguan Trade Minister Aljendo Martinez Cuenta, who began appearances yesterday in California before academic, social and media groups. He will be in Boston Sunday and Monday, when he will address the Harvard School of Business Administration.